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FM AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9318  
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC  
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RHMFISS/CJTF HOA

S E C R E T DJIBOUTI 000531

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/EX  
CJTF-HOA FOR POLAD  
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA WATCHER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/18/2023  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [MOPS](#) [PHSA](#) [AU](#) [ER](#) [DJ](#)  
SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI: FRENCH REPORT CALM ON BORDER

REF: DJIBOUTI 521 (AND PREVIOUS)

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES KATHLEEN LIST FOR  
REASONS 1.4 B, D.

¶1. (C) CDA stopped by to see French Ambassador Dominique Decherf the afternoon of June 18 en route to the Maritime Safety and Security Conference being sponsored by CJTF-HOA. While discussing the mostly non-credible rumors floating around the capital, the Ambassador received a call from Brigadier General Philippe Lefort, leader of the French forces in Djibouti. He said a report from a just-concluded French reconnaissance mission along the border indicated everything was calm, although there were some indications that some Eritrean troops may have pulled back "somewhat" in preparation for a Djiboutian counterattack (deemed highly unlikely). The Ambassador noted that the whole confrontation would have been avoided had the opposing forces not been sitting nose-to-nose (as photographed by the NY Times) on the disputed land, and added that the French are actively encouraging diplomacy with the Government of Djibouti as the solution.

¶2. (S) Despite incendiary quotes in the government's propaganda tool La Nation citing the Djiboutian President, Decherf noted President Guelleh had issued only one statement at Bouffard Hospital after visiting wounded soldiers after the initial fighting. The next scheduled statement will be Guelleh's commentary on National Day, June 27, at the Presidential Palace. Decherf says Guelleh is a cautious, experienced politician, unlikely to be swayed by proponents of radical responses to Eritrean aggression within the Djiboutian government. Decherf said it was rumored at the highest level that Guelleh was the person to order Djiboutian troops to withdraw from the contested ridge, in the interest of calming the situation down.  
LIST